OUR SHORT STORY PAGE

THE SHRINE OF BRIC-A-BRAC

(Copyright 1909, by Benj. B. Hampton.)

"Nothing begins and nothing ends that is not paid in with a moon," FRANCIS THOMPSON.

ENRY LYNN WILLIAMS, after fretting through eighteen years of this uncertain exis-tence, had made up his mind to quit studying civil engineering and do something. civil engineering and do something.

There is a certain kind of very sincere very young man—he would not allew himself to be called a boy—who knows he can conquer the world. At fifteen he is going to be the greatest locomotive engineer who ever pulled a throttle; at sixteen he is going to be the champion prizefighter at his weight, 120 pounds; at seventeen he is going to be a poet. And in his eighteenth year he intends (1) going on the stage; (2) entering a railroad office and "working up"; (3) taking up law and surpassing Daniel Webster; (4) enlisting in the nayy (as a lieutenant)—and so on. He has imagination, vigor, brains and enterprise. At all sorts of unscheduled moments a new Career waves itself vastly in the heavens before his unfocused eyes.

He is going to beat the earth, conquer creation,

He is going to beat the earth, conquer creation, travel far, bang and batter and mold and hew Big Things; make millions in money, and come tramping home to spill his gold grandly in the lap of his idolizing family. He is all fire and glory and melodrama. home to spill his gold grandly in the lap of his ladning family. He is all fire and glory and melodrama. He cries with a secret pride at his own tears; he boasts loadly, and dreams of how his right arm can back up his boast. He admires the strong men of the world; for he is a strong man. He is unduly profane in speech, purposely uncouth in action. He swears and kicks his way about among a simpler, quieter folk. He is disdainful of the smaller things; is he not big? He blusters at assistance; is he not self-reliant? He casts the eye of intense suspicion upon love; is he not a Man? Is he soon to bang and whack the earth and its fullness? Yes. But as he bangs, there are little, quiet shrines Yes. But as he bangs, there are little, quiet shrines of bric-a-brac somewhere, always, which he knocks hel-

of bric-a-brac somewhere, always, which he knocks helter-skelter along with the other cosmic rubbish, and
these shrines are of the bric-a-brac of hearts and
dreams; of some one else's heart and some one else's
dreams. He doesn't see them; he doesn't know them.
But they are there, the great, sweet fruit of many years.
Therefore, when he thinks he is grandest he is most
ly cruel. For nobody in this foolish world has the right
eves to see the greatness of what he does; but some eyes to see the greatness of what he does; but some

ly cruel. For nobody in this foolish world has the right eyes to see the greatness of what he does; but some one, always some one, has just the eyes to see its cruelty. One word more: if Emperor Eighteen is the right kind he sooner or later makes a momentary truce with the cosmos, and spends tender times repairing the bricabrae. If he is the wrong kind, and eats his Career like hasheesh, and bangs things dreadfully—I would not put down this tale for you to read. Be sure of that.

This story began with a Henry Lynn Williams, but this is not Henry Lynn Williams's story.

Miss Belle La Vue walked primly in black down "Soubrette Row" in the City of Skyscrapers and Scum. It was stuffy August and stuffier high noon, and Miss La Vue would not have worn black only it did not show the dirt, required less cleansing, and was therefore cheaper. For Miss La Vue was poor. She would not have walked with quite so prim and vertical a back either, only she was leading Bebe by a chain. Bebe, some five pounds of canine chrysanthemums tugged heavily two feet in front. Miss La Vue tugged at the other end of the chain with her right hand, and by hanking up her forearm into a slightly strained swan's neck managed to maintain a very prim bearing. With a staccato movement of her legs and feet she passed down the Row.

It was a dingy neighborhood that had never been any-

It was a dingy neighborhood that had never been any-thing else. All the houses were alike, four stories high, with basements and false brownstone fronts. Soiled rags and airing bedding hung from the windows. There were no front yards. Steps ran straight from the street into dark and narrow hallways filled with the odor of miscellaneous cheap cooking. Then more dark, street into dark and narrow hallways filled with the odor of miscellaneous cheap cooking. Then more dark, narrow steps up, up, to the back hall bedroom at \$3 per week. People, too, hung themselves from the front windows, or sat on the steps, or stood on the sidewalks. Sounds of trashy music rattled through the street; vaudeville quartettes practicing, phonographs shricking, a hand organ plucking out the Marseillaise, a tiny soprano trilling a pathetic ballad, parrots squawking, flute-players running the scale. The people in the windows were generally at this time of day, women with blondined heads drying their rather short hair in the sun, passing their arms back and forth in the process.

Their cheeks were the stiff, smooth, durable, chalky cheeks of women accustomed to grease paint and much powder. Their voices were gritty, little, falsetto voices.

powder. Their voices were gritty, little, falsetto voices. When they were not falsetto they were false. In tem-

When they were not falsetto they were false. In temperament they were light creatures, chatty, overagreeable, prying, full, of the smaller traits—apt to be domestic or public nuisances.

The men were all fancy clothes and overposed posture. Their faces were smooth-shaven, but generally seamed and pitted. There were many canes, and little dogs, and cigarettes among them. Their talk ran tittering about, like the crackling of thorns, in millions and millions and millions. tions of devious ramifications from two subjects—the stage and themselves. The whole sense of the place, however, was one of novel commonplaceness, of stale freshness, of shallow depths.

For there were depths. There was Miss Belle La

Vue.
Almost alternately, each soiled basement contained a Almost alternately, each soiled basement contained a restaurant of some sort—French, German, Italian, Chinese and the American "quick lunch." In hot weather these restaurants removed to the basek yard under canvas; in the winter they were established in the long, low-peilinged room just inside the basement door. Board cost \$4 a week, without wine—a cheap, red chemical claret which turned the oilcloth table covers green. Board with a back room on the top floor could be had for a combined price of six dollars a week. It was upon this arrangement that Miss La Vue kept herself in existence at The Gotham, a German establishment at No. 215.

No. 215.

Here she now entered, stopping in the front basement room long enough to deposit Bebe tamely upon a chair. Then she made her way to the back yard to eat her lumcheon. The place was almost deserted, as scraps of food and soiled plates here and there on the empty tables testified. The Brothers Hamm, strong men, were finishing their salad. Midgo, a wrinkled-faced, monkey-like dwarf, was depictable as demictance. No one else was there exsalad. Midgo, a wrinkled-faced, monkey-like dwarf, was drinking a demi-tasse. No one else was there except Hermann, the proprietor. As she sat down at a table, she threw back her heavy veil and—revealed her age. Forty or thereabouts. Her hair had been peroxided into streaky blondness. Her forehead and mouth showed wrinkles. There was a suggestion of sadness in her eyes, the sadness of a chaste life; a suggestion of character in her nose and chin.

If the reader had judged from her name that she was French, he made a mistake. She had been Miss Hettie Bassett, of Wamego, Kansas. The "Belle La Vue" had come with many of the other false glories of stage life. Her teeth were bad and her hands were plain. She had never been beautiful, but she had once possessed the direct word looks of a simple frank people used to the direct good looks of a simple frank people, used to homely living and not ignoble lives.

To-day there seemed to the close observer something extraordinary about her, as if this ordinary woman were

agitated by some latent sweetness, as if an ineffable soft-ness filled her heart.

"Good morning," said Hermann, coming over to her.
He was one of those Germans who though coming to this country in childhood, speak English crisply, with-out a trace of phlegm. His face was hard and bards to the stood on his healst he ed, as if chiseled from flint. He stood on his heels; he moved at you as if he were flint, "That room you wanted is ready-empty now. Dick moved out this morn-

Her distress was evident. She flushed, stuttered, and put a note of querulous pleading into her voice: "This

. It's sooner than I expected, Hermann. I didn't exactly say I wanted it, you know. I-I have to wait until I hear from . . . until I get a letter."
"Here it is; came this morning." He handed her an

envelope.

She looked at it hastily, in confusion. Then continued: "I wouldn't like to rent the room and then have things turn out different. You see? How—how much

"Four and a half. It's bigger than yours, you know."

She trembled slightly, in confusion. "I don't suppose I could wait—could I? I mean, it's not likely you'll rent the room soon again; is it? If it stayed empty, you see.

I could get it any time then, and not have to pay for it until I wanted to—to use it?"



"TRAMPED STEADILY UP THREE FLIGHTS TO HER LITTLE BEDROOM."

"I can't say. Might rent it to-morrow; maybe next week; maybe next month. That's the way with rooms."

"Oh, I don't know what to do." She looked at him uncertainty. "You see, it's got a door leading into my room, and it's got those broad window sills so I could fix up a cozy corner and..." Hermann was paying no attention. These remarks he had heard over and over during the last few weeks. With a twinge she sat quiet. "I . . . think I'll wait a few days," she ended. Hermann moved away calmly.

Hermann moved away calmly.

He had heard a whistle, and the door bell clanged. It was the mail carrier. He walked stolidly to the door, as if in no hurry at all, and in a few minutes returned, mutely, with another letter for her. This she broke open and read. It was from Wamego, and was written in the slanting, awry, painful handwriting of the laboring man.

"DEAR HETTIE: Leander writes me for your address. He is in Chicago and wants to bring divorce proceedings against you. He wants to serve some papers. Shall I tell him where you are at? Please let me know. This is the 3d time he has written:
Affly, your Bro.,

She bit her lip, slightly. Then smiled, slightly. And finished her luncheon in suppressed excitement.

Afterwards, she tucked Bebe under her arm and trainped steadily up three flights of stairs to her little bedroom with an easy, supple motion begot of her many years of stage dancing. The excitement seemed to gain on her as she mounted. She had the air of carrying a noble secret which suffused itself through her nerves and made her tingle with a hidden joy. In her boxlike room she threw the dog onto the bed, pulled off her waist, undid her corset and wrapped a flimsy kimono about her. Then, hunched up on the bed, beside the dog, she opened the other letter, pulsating with Pandoralike delight over her precious possession. She kissed Bebe on the nose, hunched herself into a

still cozier relaxation, and read:
"Dearest Old Dandy Dear: You just bet your boots I'm coming to see you! And right away!!! I tell you I am getting mighty tired of this rotten old place, and anyway I'm just hungering for a sight of YOU. Just think!

way I'm just hungering for a sight of YOU. Just think! I haven't seen you for over three years. You won't know me, I'll bet. I am 5 ft. 10 inches tall now.

"Regarding money. I don't need any just now, as I am working, as you know. Of course when I start to make the trip, then I will have to depend upon you, dearest. I could make good use of \$5 now, if you would lend it to me—my shoes need half soles and I wear out my sox very quickly. These people here don't pay me one-fifteenth of what I am worth to them, the robbers.

But you and I will have to not up with it temporarily I But you and I will have to put up with it temporarily, I

suppose.

"One thing, though. I am not going back to school next month. I am through with school! Whenever they can get a college course down to two years—or three years—so a man of brains can get what they've get to offer him and go on his way without hanging get to offer him and go on his way without hanging around until the moss grows up his back and over his ears—why, then, I'll talk to 'em about taking a full course. I've got enough schooling, though dearest, What I want to do is get a good job and make some money. It makes me SICK to think of you having paid for my two years at the varsity, besides buying all my clothes and everything!

"It's got to stop, old honey. And it's going to stop, as soon as I can get out of this miserable railroad office and get a good job. That's one reason why I'm coming to see you. I've got an idea what I'll do. But I want

to see you. I've got an idea what I'll do. But I want to whisper it right into your dear old ear; so I won't

"You're just the dearest, sweetest, old mother that ever lived and I'm coming to you right away-right away-RIGHT AWAY! "Your affectionate

"P. S. Won't get to write to you to-morrow as I am going down to Kansas City for a day."

She sat, smiling triumphantly for a few moments, turning the letter idly in her hand. Then she burst out in a smother of affection for Bebe, and in an ecstatic little monologue: "Oh, he's coming. . . he's coming! My ownest own boy, Bebe! No, he doesn't look like you. He's tall, and strong and dark, and . . . sweet! And he's coming to see his mother that's waited for him all these years. Three years. Bebe! And he is to have the big. years. Three years, Bebe! And he is to have the big room next to us-the one that costs four dollars and a half a week-and the door's to be open between us. And he's to have a coay corner, and books, and a pipe rack. And he's to stay just as long as he wants to." The

By Harris Merton Lyon

face of Miss Belle La Vue was quite transfigured with that gentle light which hungered mothers show. She sat huddled into her dressing sacque and read his letter again and again. Finally she arose and found the She sat huddled into her dressing sacque and read his letter again and again. Finally she arose and found the brief note telling about the divorce. It was unimportant. She merely glanced at it. Her boy's letter was the main thing. He was the one great thing in her life now, as he had always been. Now more than ever. This other had been a mistake; and, behold, it had gone the logical way of all mistakes. It was being cleaned up, gotten out of the road, as one cuts rigging loose from a storm-beaten ship and casts it by the board. She did not regret that she had married Leander Williams, the adipose, weak, good-humored newspaper man. For the marriage had brought her the boy. The boy was hers. Had always been. Would always be. She had demanded it; Leander had allowed it; and the boy preferred it. Had she had the money she would have gotten the divorce herself long ago. Williams, on his side, lolled along in his easy way, procrastinating. Now he was going to do it, after ten years of waiting. She wondered, in a detached fashion, who and what sort the new woman was. For, of course, it must have been a woman; Leander would never have voluntarily stiffened into action. Oh, well. It didn't matter.

She took a five-dollar bill from her worn pocketbook and sent it by registered mail that afternoon. With it she wrote:

"My Sweetheart: Here is the five dollars you wished."

she wrote:
"My Sweetheart: Here is the five dollars you wished. Now, tell me definitely when you can come. I must make all sorts of arrangements here for you, and must

know almost to a day when to expect you. Oh, you don't know how badly I want you, dear!

"I am sorry you feel the way you do about college. Personally I would like you to stay there until you've graduated. I think I could manage it somehow. I would like to try, anyway; and I would be proud of the chance to try. Your mother expects you to grow up to be a big, strong man some day, and she knows enough of this world to realize that the better your education is the bigger and stronger man you'll be. But we can talk all that over when you come. . . . Oh, Lynn, when you come!

"I am crazy to know your secret ambition; but I'm perfectly content to wait and let you "whisper it in my ear." Just to think of my own boy whispering in my ear! Why, it takes me back to your baby days.

"I will get this off in a hurry—for fear you need the

"To think that you are five feet ten!
"Your ownest,

"Your ownest,

Mamma."

To her brother she scribbled two lines: "Certainly, tell him my address. Lynn is coming to live with me!"

"Lynn is coming to live with me!" The thought played in her heart like a sunbeam. She sang it to Bebe, she laughed it to her friends, the fussy little actorladies and the loud actor-men up on the Rialto, around the managers' offices She began to pay attention to the style of clothes young men were wearing; she would buy him a suit of clothes the very day he came. She mentally compared him with the youths she met. He was taller, stronger, more courteous; his shoulders was taller, stronger, more courteous; his shoulders would not slouch as this boy's did; his voice would be deep, not a falsetto; he would smoke a pipe, not cigar-

Many times she tried on her new waists, and, as she looked at herself in the glass, she wondered if he would like them. She would wait and get her own new suit when she got him his; then he could help her pick it out. Her hair bothered her. Instinctively she felt he would not like it because it was blondined. She remembered are thing looked this letters about a girl's hair that something in one of his letters about a girl's hair that he had liked. She laughed. His words were: "It was brown, and soft, and nice-smelling." She should explain to him that on the stage she was expected to blondine her hair sometimes in order to please a manager. She wondered what he thought about actors. He had never said. Suppose he didn't like them! And she knew no

With hungry eyes she watched the room next hers day after day. A week went by and still it was not rented. Then an intolerable apprehension seized her, a fear that somebody would take it before her boy came. She wavered fitfully. Should she rent it and pay the extra money for nothing? She had not told Hermann what she wanted the room for. Should she? Of course it would not make any difference to kim; he would rent it whenever anyone came along with the

A letter from Lynn, written two days after he got back from Kansas City, settled her mind. He wrote: "I thiak I can come in just about two weeks from now.

come. The five dollars came in mighty handy, and you know how much I thank you for lending it to me.

I, if you don't come and let me know what they are?"

She waited. Five days later there came an answer to

know how much I thank you for lending it to me.

"Now don't be cross with the boy that loves you more than anything else on earth. Just remember he's a MAN now and has come to the point where he's got to shape his whole future destiny, and he's worried to death trying to make up his mind what to do.

"But I'm going to win out and win BIG—the very next thing I tackle. And then you'll come in for your share, which God knows you deserve, old honey mother!"

"Mr. Hermann," she said that evening, "I I'll take that room next to mine be beginning to-morrow." Then began delight for Miss Belle La Vue, who, until then, had not been at all sure that delight had not gone from her forever.

It was the room that brought it. She bought a coverlet for his bed, and put a wide ruffle on it with her own needle and thread. Pictures—he liked pen-and-inks—came next, to hide the cracks and grease-spots on the

came next, to hide the cracks and grease-spots on the wall paper. She bought him a pair of slippers, soft leather ones; and with her own hands made him a slipper case which hung against the wall. The cozy corner was a source of infinite delightful little pains to her; the boxcouch (was it long enough for a strapping, handsome boy of five feet ten?); the burlap cover (did handsome boy of five feet ten?); the burlap cover (did he like bottle green?); the soft pillows (one in his college colors; she had tramped New York over faithfully without being able to find the emblem itself of the far western school); a pipe rack (she didn't like the one that was a row of skulls; maybe he would have liked that better than the monkheads); the books (the only one she was sure he liked was the "Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam"; she liked that herself); the collar case which she made out of a pasteboard how and pipe ribbons (did

Khayyam"; she liked that herself); the collar case which she made out of a pasteboard box and pink ribbons (did men ever use collar cases?); the laundry bag with the stamped design which she had embroidered over in red silk; the bath robe which she folded and laid carefully over the foot of the bed; the little patent mirror and the shaving set placed lovingly beneath it (the old set she had given him must be in pretty bad shape by this time); the socks (his letter had said he wore them out quickly; she hoped he liked the patterns she had chosen); the white-and-blue window curtains threaded neatly on their wires; the "throw" for the corner of his dressing-table; the toilet articles, the bookshelves, the droplight—quietly, tenderly, lovingly the little shrine of bric-a-brac grew, the bric-a-brac of hearts and dreams. "Lynn is coming to live with me!"

She sent him thirty-five dollars, and added:
"I have a little surprise waiting when you get here; I

"Lynn is coming to live with me!"

She sent him thirty-five dollars, and added:

"I have a little surprise waiting when you get here; I hope you'll like it—and will whisper into my ear that you like it. I didn't begin to know how lonely I was until the last few days. Do you think you will care for Bebe. He's such a cute little tyke, I know you will."

Bebe nosed about the new room in frantic rapture, rapture transfused from his mistress's rapture, the sole confident of her heart's desire.

"Innn is coming to live with me!" It hovered in the air like perhame. Does anyone, not a mother, know the noble pathos of motherhood?—how the object of love is born in pain which is overwhelmed by joy, how it grows through bliss and sorrow, bliss and sorrow alternately pulsing in the mother blood? What nights of longing and what days of praise she passes through! Her singing is drowned by her weeping; her weeping is broken by her smiles. The anguish of her soul makes alien anguish paltry; the full flood of her happiness makes other happiness pale. Martyrdom, sacrifice, slavery are all her lot in fullest measure. All her young life she is fighting a specter. She lives under a fear—haunted. If not one fear, then it is another, a troop of them, a train, a legion, a myriad. She is viligent against the machinations of all mankind. Hawklike she watches humanity. Nothing shall grone in and corrunt the machinations of all mankind. Hawklike she watches humanity. Nothing shall grope in and corrupt her own. . . . her own! This is Fear, but it is the noblest fear under heaven. It is fear born of an unfathomable longing, a longing after the deepest and highest things, that her child shall know them and have them, and indefinable longing after all the vague grand, beautiful spirit things which never fade, which loom forever before the eternal. . . "Lynn is coming to live with me!"

That was the poem of Miss La Vue's life, It was bitter as earth and it was sweet as air. He confused her. At times she was afraid she could not hold his spirit close to her, he seemed to be growing so big, so uncontrolled among another people and another set of conditions. At other times her love breathed over her, bringing like light an indefinable sureness wrote incessantly—always with a compromise. He had sent a box of his belongings on by freight; but he "was not certain he could get away." In the meantime she dusted his room and added knick-knacks to its store;

She waited. Five days later there came an answer to this which appalled her, with its unaccountable fury of indecision. It was addressed "To the sweetest, dearest mother in the world" and it ran:

"Oh, I don't know what to do and I don't know how I am going to do it! I absolutely refuse to tie myself to anybody's apron strings. I am heartily disgusted with myself. To think that here I am,—starting out to conquer the world—and I don't even know where or how to begin! I'm over eighteen now and absolutely axen't done a thing. I'm saids fifteen dozen false that. to begin! I'm over eighteen now and absolutely haven't done a thing. I've made fifteen dozen false starts. I feel like blowing my head off with a revolver. I am a little dub, a whimpering little measely DUB, and the worst of it is, I know it and can't fool myself any longer. You are fooled, dear old sweetheart, because you are way off yonder where you can't see. But I can't fool myself. That's what hurts.

"I'm awfully sorry you've gone and spent all the money you have, trying to give an education to a four flush. But it can't be helped. The only thing for me to do is to go get a job somewhere as a teamster or a baggagesmasher and pay you back.

smasher and pay you back.

"You see, you don't understand me, old honey. No-body understands me. Confound it all, I don't understand myself. But I am a man, I tell you, a MAN! And I'm going to get away somewhere by myself and work out the answer, you bet your bottom dollar.

"Oh, rats! I say that but I don't believe it. The thing is impossible. How can a miserable little ignoramus (and a COWARD, to boot) ever amount to anything in this world?

"You are the only person on earth that loves me, the only one who would sit down and cry over me if I made a failure of life, and yet even you can't help me—and I wouldn't let you if you could. I couldn't—out of self-respect—let any woman help me, not even my mother. I must stand or fall on my own worth."

"And here I am like a fall out of water I might so

"And here I am—like a fish out of water. I might go to Alaska; I might go to South Africa; I might go to you. What good would it do? I am a failure before I

"Then, anyway, you'd have to pack off on the road just about the time that I got there—that's one of the beauties of that noble business of yours—and that would leave me high and dry in the hardest city in this whole tightwad land of "opportunity."

"No, sir-ee. I've got to hike for new country some—where. Maybe change my name and just how around

where. Maybe change my name and just blow around like a shiftless outcast. That would be a nice finish, wouldn't it, for the fellow that can run his transit neater and cleaner than anybody else in his class. Imagine this gun in calculus tending bar in Nome, can't you? "Honest, mamma, I hate to write this way to you. But

"Honest, mamma, I hate to write this way to you. But these are the things I actually feel. This is the REAL ME. Please try to forgive me. You asked me to let you into my secrets, you know, and so I've tried to do so. I'ts not very humorous, is it? I'll write you more to-morrow. But I'm kind of nervesick and dumpy to-night so I won't continue.

"I'd like to put my head in your arms and cry myself to sleep. Good night, dearest, sweetest old honey.

LXNN."

She flinched and gasped. What had they done to her boy out there, those people? Where had be obtained all this brutality and incoherency? She did not know how to even accept this letter. She felt only one terrible, yawning thing: her boy had changed, changed suddenly and completely. This was not the Lynn she had known and loved. His mind had been poisoned. Parts of his letter seemed insane. He had hurt her cruelly with an offhand sentence—"that noble business of A sense of ashes in the mouth came to her. She was helpless, dazed. Her heart seemed bursting with a sudden anguish. She looked at quizzical little Bebe, suiffing misfortune in the room's still air. Her lip trembled in violent uncontrol, and with a moan she sank down on the

violent uncontrol, and with a moan she sank down on the little divan in his cozy corner, crying, sobbing softly and gently stricken, and broken, and utterly undone.

Later she dried her eyes, bathed her face and sall down to think it all out. She read his letter through several times, the inexplicable letter, scrawled in big lines, spotted, dashed and smeared with capitals. As she got into it she realized that three very important years of her boy's life had been trained beyond and away from her. Concentrated academic minds had been pushing him. He had gotten hold of ideas and had twisted them. He was blind. He was in revolt. This was a tragedy, then. Perhaps just a little, everydays sort of tragedy, but tragedy nevertheless. The tragedy of blind force in revolt. Thank Heaven, though, she said to her self, that it was force. If he was her kind, the right kind, he would work out of it He said he was "nervesick." He probably had been working too hard. At this her love breathed back again, swept over her At this her love breathed back again, swept over her with a glow. She looked around the neat little room she had made ready for him, and broke out crying again.

Her poor, poor boy! How could a great big child of eighteen know his own way against the confusion of a scattered world? How-could a boy that was her boy help jumping at every stubborn stone wall that presented itself? No wonder he had sunk back now, temporarily, bewildered and

melancholy. Almost with a domestic sense of putting her house to rights she sat down now and told him all this in a long, sweet letter, a letter which thrilled in every line with silent comfort and softened love; a letter which he was not to get until some two weeks later in surroundings where it did him the most good of all. For the very morning she posted it she got a one-page scrawl wrap-ped around two twenty-dollar bills:

"Hooray! Am off to Mexico with that Kansas Cityman. Made him advance me a hundred dollars so Leond send you the \$35 plus \$5. My job is to stand hip-deep in a pit full of water and see to it that that pit is dry—mines have been flooded, you see—he's going to teach me Spanish—but I'll pick it up quicker myself. Address me care of B. Rhodes, Santiago de Paspasquiaro, Estado de Durango, Mexico. Did you get alla that?

"I love you—I love you—I love you.

"I love you—I love you.—I love you.
"We leave K. C. to-night. I'll write every day.
"Your very ownest," LYNN."

He had cut his knot.

Miss Belle La Vue sat slekly in her little bric-a-brace thrine. Bebe whined in neglect. Her eyes traveled fround the room—the cozy corner, the Rubaiyat, the slippers, the bath robe, the pictures, the shaving set, the geraniums. She felt that her sorrow was the completest thing in life. She knew that she could not have had a home; that noble business of hers had left her no such illusions. But all she had asked for was two weeks of him—two little weeks. She did not cry. She stared solemnly at his letter and the two bills. With her other hand she picked up her annual contract, signed that day—Merri Randall Company—on the road—fifty dollars a week. dollars a week.

He had thrown his doubts and hesitations over his shoulder. She knew him now. She knew he would live to break his heart for having written the words: "that noble business of yours." She knew that some day how would work with all his love to build for himself and her a shrine again, such a shrine as would make her poor little offering of chintz curtains and pen-and-ink sketches, seem miserable and childish. She knew he would conquer; she knew he would repay her all he could repay; she knew he would love her always, as he had said her

But the pathos of motherhood fell on her dumbly there in the room. She kissed the dog and held him tight

"Oh, Bebe!" she my-mured. "I'm so lonely! So lone-



"HE'S COMING TO SEE HIS MOTHER THAT'S WAITED FOR HIM ALL THESE YEARS. THREE YEARS, BEBE."

can fix things by then so as to come. I wish you were here so I could talk things over with you, though. I've got any number of irons in the fire, and I don't know which ones to let go of. I tell you, dearest, I am at a critical time in my life. Any one of five different careers is open to me. Yes, sir-ee! I could take any one of them, buckle down to good, hard work, and make a regular gold mine out of it. The fact is one of them is pretty darned near that now, a silver mine at Sanis pretty darned near that now, a silver mine at Santiago de Papasquiaro, Mexico. Fellow I met in Kansas

"But I WANT YOU. I'm just about crasy to see you, I'm tired of everything out here in this part of the country anyhow. Then there's that thing I want to whisper

"If you'll send me thirty dollars in the next two weeks by pinching I can make that do—I'm almost certain I can arrange everything so as to get out of here and

waste-paper basket. Finally she wrote him a decisive "Please do as I ask you, Lynn. Don't try to solve your problems until you see your mother. Believe me, they are not so serious as you think; although I know just how you feel about them. But give me a chance to help you; that is what I am here for."

"Come to me Lynn—right away, while you have the money. I have everything fixed up beautifully for us both so we can live together at last and be happy. Maybe you won't want to live here, when you see it. Maybe you won't want to live here, when you see it. be you would rather go off somewhere. I am not sur-prised that a young boy should want to.

Just let me know. Only, please come to me, dear. You don't know how badly I mean it when I ask it. We will go over the list of your possible careers together and